

# **Evaluation of emotion coaching workshops**

Report prepared by

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## Executive summary

- Observations of workshops and focus groups with champions were conducted in each of the five areas.
- Champions were engaged with the content which was aided by the fact that facilitators were passionate and enthusiastic about the material.
- There was no prior knowledge of emotion coaching and the majority of champions had sufficient information provided to them to make an informed decision to take part.
- Champions approached by heads of departments or directly by facilitators were more likely to engage with this way of working.
- The theoretical underpinning of emotion coaching (the neuroscience) provided champions with the confidence to disseminate it to colleagues who may not be open to this way of dealing with behavior.
- Champions found that the majority of their colleagues were receptive to emotion coaching and using it with children and young people.
- The mix of individuals attending the workshops was good to gather different perspectives from the various organisations represented, however the content of the workshops was more focused towards a school environment.
- By the end of the workshops champions had embedded emotion coaching in their personal and working lives with a plan of disseminating it to the rest of their organisations.
- Future workshops are needed and should incorporate time to do more role plays, complete online learning during the workshops, and more time to work with colleagues to solidify learning and plan the future.
- Support is needed for champions to keep the momentum of enthusiasm during the first few years of embedding this new skill.

## Results

Observational work and focus groups were conducted in the five areas where a total of six half day workshops ran throughout 2015. The numbers of individuals attending each of the final or penultimate workshops ranged between 8 and 15. It was apparent during the observational sessions that champions were not only engaged with the content being delivered, but interacted well with each other and the facilitators of each group. Facilitators were extremely enthusiastic and passionate about the content which influenced the level of engagement from champions.

*" they have been so enthusiastic" (FG01)*

*"She's infectious...and always available" (FG04)*

Focus groups were held in each of the areas, with a total of 56 champions took part in focus groups. The aim of the discussion was to gather information about the level of knowledge champions had prior to attending, what they had learned, how they had applied emotion coaching, plans for the future and issues they faced during the process. All the focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. The focus group data was analysed with normalization process theory (NPT) in mind, which aims to understand the dynamics of implementing, embedding, and integrating a new intervention into an organization. NPT provides a conceptual framework to explore and explain the processes by which new interventions and services are embedded (routinely operationalized in everyday work) and integrated (sustained) in practice. NPT consists of four main constructs: Coherence, Cognitive participation, Collective action, and Reflexive monitoring. Coherence is the sense-making work that people do individually and collectively when they are faced with the problem of operationalising a new set of practices. Cognitive Participation is the relational work that people do to build and sustain a community of practice around a new way of working. Collective Action is the operational work that people do to enact a new set of practices. Finally, Reflexive Monitoring is the appraisal work that people do to assess and understand the ways that a new set of practices affect them and others around them.

### **Coherence (sense making)**

Many of the champions had little or no knowledge of emotion coaching prior to the workshops. Those with little knowledge seemed to have known the various concepts linked to emotion coaching but were unable to label it. Many of the champions were emailed directly by their heads of department or other individuals outside of their organization to notify them of this opportunity to take part in emotion coaching workshops.

*"...she had emailed those who had taken part in the healthy young people surveys and the PFSAs were provided information separately" (FG01)*

*"I was invited to a little group to find out what it was about and if I was interested as a PFSAs, I am always interested about that because it's around providing the best around for the kids....and for me it fits all in with the conscious parenting..." (FG03)*

Some of the champions were directly approached and encouraged to attend the information day by Sarah, Janet or one of the facilitators. Those who attended the information presentation at the start found it extremely useful and helpful to be able to talk to Sarah, Janet and other facilitators at the presentation days.

*"From coming at the start of it, it was very clear what the expectations were and they talked through what would be happening...so if you were in on it at the beginning it was clear" (FG01)*

*"I think for me the most powerful day for me was the induction day I attended...it was about hearing from someone who like me was skeptical....to hear it from someone who wasn't sure but then tried it and was turned around made an impact on me" (FG03)*

There were some champions who were late coming into the programme were not given sufficient information from their line manager and felt disadvantaged coming to the first session not really know what was expected of them.

*"You need to come to the first session to understand what is expected from you" (FG01)*

Many of the champions had no expectations of the first full day of training. Although the champions found the first day extremely informative and useful, some did find that the amount of information provided was too much and it could have been split across multiple sessions.

*"I remember coming away thinking oh this is going to be good" (FG01)*

All the champions found the structure of the workshops useful, the opportunity to network and liaise with other individuals helpful, and the mix of theory and practical balanced. The variety of topics was welcomed, and the introduction of their theoretical background to emotion coaching was particularly well received. This provided many of the "junior" champions, i.e. not heads, the confidence to "sell" it to their heads of departments, governors, and even parents. Without the neuroscience behind emotion coaching many champions felt that their peers would believe they were taking a "soft" approach to dealing with disruptive behaviour from children and young people.

*"It's very useful with disapproving parents" (FG01)*

The neuroscience part of the workshops was well received, because it provided the evidence that champions needed to feel confident enough to disseminate it to colleagues. In addition to this, it was pointed out that not all individuals may embrace the neuroscience aspect of emotion coaching, however it was the key point used to hook other colleagues when cascading.

*"It's nice to know for young people that everyone's brain is like that" (FG03)*

*"you get more sort of senior leader, the more I want something that works, I want something with evidence behind, something that is fact and react much, much better to neuroscience" (FG04)*

*"it was brilliant...just makes you understand what you are doing" (FG02)*

*"it helps you understand what's going on for people" (FG05)*

All of the champions found Dan Siegel's hand model useful and have used it to teach kids of all ages, as well as peers and parents. Some champions were fluent in the terminology when describing their own personal experience at home with their own kids "flipping their lid".

*"my 4-year-old and 6-year-old tell me if one of them has flipped their lid" (FG01)*

*"...so when your teenager flips their lid because you looked at them the wrong way, this is how you can deal with it, and we get this all the time with parents of teenagers" (FG05)*

The uptake of the mindfulness aspect of the programme was mixed. Although many champions saw the benefit of using mindfulness and practicing it as a part of emotion coaching, there were a handful who were sceptical and did not embrace this. However, this may be influenced by the culture within the school of organization.

*"...when I am talking to my colleagues they don't want to know about mindfulness, they don't want that kind of trendy, wishy, washiness of mindfulness, bit harsh on mindfulness but they want something that's going to make behavior in the classroom better" (FG04)*

However, those who did understand it as a foundation to being able to emotion coach more effectively if done from a calm and even place. The link between mindfulness and being an emotion coach may need further clarity and focus in future training programmes.

*"...it does have a place in terms of the emotional wellbeing of staff, young people, etc, and I know it's something that we are keen to embed" (FG01)*

*"We got them (adolescents) to do it with toffees, mindful of eating toffees, and it's difficult to talk chewing a toffee...young people and children think it's cool...they are receptive to it" (FG01)*

*"I find it helps me...but children get stressed as well...I would like to try and get to do it with them...give them that space" (FG03)*

*"it was nice to have that 10 minutes at the start which gave me space from what was happening before to the rest of the afternoon...by practicing myself I can say how it has been useful for me" (FG02)*

*"it did help me and the emotion coaching side of things...and really helpful for young people with depression" (FG05)*

### **Cognitive Participation & Collective Action**

Many champions brought along colleagues within their organisations, for example those who were heads within schools brought along their SENCOs. This seemed to affect the level of confidence felt when discussing dissemination and cascading of emotion coaching to peers.

All champions felt passionately about working with children and young people and doing something that tapped into emotions rather than having a "punitive" culture within their organisations. It was apparent that those attending were selected as their style of working incorporated aspects of emotion coaching or worked with emotions and felt it would be relevant to their jobs.

*"On a personal note I am interested in young people's emotional wellbeing and wanted more information" (FG01)*

*"...I said to the head teacher that actually until we have children emotional wellbeing kind of at a basic level then they are not going to be ready to learn...so we changed the learning development plan an out emotions coaching in there." (FG01)*

*"I had a student having difficulty and she had suggested I use this with that student and could be used with other students in the school" (FG03)*

There was some discussion as to how to ensure that the whole organisation/school embrace emotion coaching. Champions found that the majority of their colleagues were receptive to emotion coaching and using it with children and young people.

*"I think the impact will change the minds of some people who aren't interested" (FG03)*

*"I think it is important for all the heads to be on board...we have been lucky our head is on board...it has to come from the top to be effective as a whole school taking it on board" (FG01)*

*"...there wasn't the backing necessarily from the senior leaders...if the presentation was done to the leaders of the school and said look this is great...it's a bit bottom up" (FG05)*

One school is running a pilot study gathering evidence to present to other teachers showing the positive effects of emotion coaching through case studies of children. Those involved in the pilot each have one case study to gather data on which will be compiled at the end. The children within that school are also aware of what is going on. The champions pointed out that if you have evidence from your own children it is more effective within the school. In order to change the mindset of individuals or organisations you need the evidence to present first.

*"We have already done an inset to teachers....to give them an intro to emotions coaching and action plan for the year....we are going to cascade to teachers after Christmas after the pilot" (FG01)*

When starting the process, some champions found themselves consciously going through the various steps of emotion coaching until they felt it had fully embedded in their practice. Champions found themselves becoming better in identifying when emotion coaching is appropriate in different situations, and the impact of making small changes to the way they work.

*"taking the responsibility of making a massive impact on a child's life with small changes" (FG04)*

In addition, students became more aware of who they go to when feeling different emotions and that they would be listened to. One particular champion relayed a story of a student leaving class to just sit with one of the champions in silence until they were ready to talk about what was happening, and the champion become more aware of the most appropriate time to use emotion coaching with that student. Other champions working with younger students used other techniques, such as drawing emotions to enable students to have the down time before going in to deliver emotion coaching.

*"For me, I had a very challenging child and once he got to know that I wasn't going to shout, rant and rave, that I was going to be calm and I was going to wait for him to be calm, the relationship really developed there and he would calm down a lot quicker, because he couldn't deal, if I had shouted at him he wouldn't of been able to deal, and that's what he was getting elsewhere from other staff, so he ended up spending a lot of time with me, but he knew that once he was in my office, it would be fine, cause things would be calm, and I wouldn't talk to him until he was calm...but it took a while for him to be like that...he would ask to come off the playground to sit in my office because he found a safe place" (FG03)*

Champions found the case studies a useful exercise in consolidating their learning and demonstrating how effective emotion coaching could be.

The majority of champions had accessed the online learning, although some champions admitted not having the time to be able to complete the course. Although those champions who completed the online learning stated that it did not take long, this was dependent on the individuals. Amongst the pressures from their jobs, and personal lives many champions found it hard to find the time to complete the learning.

*"that was my biggest challenge fitting it in" (FG03)*

*"and I think going away with the best intentions, it's just following it up" (FG05)*

Some champions did feel that the online learning helped consolidate the various concepts brought up during the workshops, although the link sometimes was not explicit. If possible, in future if there

was some time built in with each training session to dedicate to completing the online learning, this may marry up this aspect with the workshops more efficiently.

*"I found it really, really helpful...was quite keen to do the online learning because I couldn't stop doing it" (FG01)*

*"Sometimes going from the text to the journal and back again was sometimes tricky...navigating around that element" (FG01)*

The other resource that was extremely useful to champions was the google drive as many used it as a library especially when designing presentations to cascade to their colleagues. The Facebook site was also useful resource with multiple feeds informing champions regularly on the most up to date information.

### **Reflexive monitoring**

Some champions would have preferred more opportunity to carry out role plays to practice emotion coaching more during the sessions. In addition, as some of the groups consisted of multiple teachers from the same school it would have been useful to have some down time to be able to develop a cascading plan together during the sessions.

*" other training I have been on has only been primary teachers and it's been nice to have that variety and meet new people" (FG01)*

*" there is elements we can put into practice, not easily but still useful, it's just taken a lot more thought as to how to" (FG01)*

As many of the champions were already connected to their emotions and were sympathetic to the impact of emotions on behaviour, this training brought their awareness to the forefront. It reinforced the importance of recognising and acknowledging emotions of children and young people, and solidified it for the champions. The training also provided champions with the ability to talk more confidently about emotions with their colleagues and students.

*"The key point for me was the naming of the emotion, not telling the kid how they are feeling" (FG03)*

It is important to engage with individuals who already have some understanding and are open to working with emotions. Not all colleagues of champions were open to the idea of emotion coaching, and champions have found some barriers in advocating this way of working with children and young people.

*"Suppose it has reinforced it, from our point of view we are quite pastoral anyway, just has a name, that's what I was doing" (FG01)*

*"If I look back in hindsight of the times it hasn't worked it has been because it was the wrong time...not because it wasn't working, just because it's just not the right time" (FG01)*

Some champions talked about the difficulty working with older kids who have had negative experiences of adults not listening to them. In these situations, gaining the trust and confidence from these kids takes longer when using emotion coaching, as many of these kids do not believe they will be listened to.

*"Its quite...it does make an impact quite quickly, think the children are taken aback ...it does calm them quicker...they are able to problem solve themselves later on without the adult intervention"*  
(FG01)

*"It made me more thoughtful about how I approach things, I think I was guilty of dismissing....and not always dealing with what was going on underneath, it's definitely made me focus more deeply on what's going on and not trying to fix it straight away"* (FG01)

Time of day is also difficult, although many understood why the afternoons were chosen, however this could have also affected retention rates.

*"It would help me if the workshops weren't in the afternoon....as it is the key time to do the phone calls, see parents...I haven't been able to come to all of the them"* (FG01)

Champions wanted to keep most of the content the same of these workshops. However, the content delivered was directly related to a school environment, making it hard for other organisations to engage. It was suggested that the first day could be split into three or four, to reduce the amount of information being disseminated, which in turn could improve retention rates at further workshops.

*"Maybe if you split the first session into four chunks, have a new bit each time so that gradually build up your knowledge and you could reflect a bit more on your learning"* (FG02)

The mix of individuals attending the workshops was good to gather different perspectives from the various organisations represented. The group learning environment increased confidence and the shared experiences empowered champions to trust their newly learned skills.

*"...listening to everyone's experiences has given me that, I suppose that empowerment to know that my gut feeling about how to deal with an issue with a child is the right way not just thinking of a temporary thing to do and I have got to do this, this and this, you know that child just needs you to go..."* (FG03)

More time and dedication to practicing emotion coaching was also needed to allow for the concepts to fully embed within individuals' practices. More interactive sessions involving role plays and more time to network and problem solve with existing team members was also needed. The programme possibly needs restructuring with the first workshop being split and incorporating more practical exercises to fully embed the skills.

*"We've been given a lot of paper, worksheets, but not enough time in the sessions to work through the resources, because when you get back to work you just don't have that time"* (FG02)

*"Last two workshops could have had more practical examples to work through"* (FG01)

*"Maybe have less workshops with more structured exercises"* (FG03)

Peer mentoring would have been useful. There was supposed to be one workshop on it, but there wasn't a big focus on this. It was also suggested that there could be an element of training young people to be peer mentors to make it more sustainable.

Champions reflected on potential barriers to embedding emotion coaching into practice and one salient theme arose: time. *"Time...other kids in the room"* (FG01) were barriers experienced by some champions in that they were unable to focus on one particular child in a big classroom setting within the allocated time during a lesson.

*"...time to actually sit down with people to do it"* (FG04)



The champions commented that engaging with different schools (primary to high school) and organisations during the training was useful. If emotion coaching is delivered early on in a child's life this would make it easier for staff as children move up to each class and school.

*"If we could get a bit more joined up then it would be more effective" (FG01)*

### **Mental health toolkit**

Many of the champions had tried to use the toolkit at least once during the programme, however many did not find it user-friendly or interactive enough to use it with kids/parents. Although they understood that it was more of an added resource for their toolbox, many did not find the word "toolkit" appropriate in describing it. The term "toolkit" implies a more interactive resource, with possible videos or other links, such as Mind Ed. It was not a resource that someone could refer to quickly as navigating to a particular topic was not easy.

*"It's not got the right quite branding...it's the word toolkit, thought it would be more interactive...it's not a toolkit" (FG01)*

*"the more you go on it the way you find around it...it's a bit muddily" (FG01)*

*"...not always simple where to look on it" (FG01)*

*"...it's quite hard to find information" (FG02)*

*"...there's a lot there I can use for my work" (FG05)*

*"feels like a bit of yellow pages" (FG05)*

### **Conclusions**

Champions had little or no prior knowledge of the theoretical framework underpinning emotion coaching before attending the workshops. It was clear from the presentations, case studies and focus group discussions that champions had both an individual and shared understanding of how to use emotion coaching in their setting and the impact of using this method on children, young people, peers and parents. Across the five areas champions who have thoroughly engaged with emotion coaching have clearly embedded it into their practice, and are embedding it in the curriculum as part of the cascading.

If there were to be any further training provided, it is important to consider how this is disseminated efficiently and effectively to members of staff within organisations and whether it should be a bottom up or top down approach. In addition, workshops may need modifications to the structure and content to allow for consolidation of learning through various means (i.e. doing the online learning, role play). The timing of the workshops may also have been an issue, as some champions mentioned the problem of attending in the afternoon, as well as waiting for the next academic year to incorporate emotion coaching in inset day programmes.

The facilitators running the workshops provided a supportive, learning environment for champions during the course of the year of training. There is a concern, however, that the momentum will diminish following the completion of the workshops, and whether it is sustainable without a lead person supporting the champions. Despite this champions felt enthusiastic and determined to promote emotion coaching within their organisations and feel it is fully embedded into their practice.

## Recommendations

- The facilitators played an important role in delivering the material passionately and enthusiastically, which motivated champions to stay engaged with the process, thus it is important to maintain these types of individuals for future workshops.
- The time of year for workshops needs to be carefully considered in future when considering how to incorporate this way of working within a curriculum or disseminating the information as part of an inset day in schools.
- More day workshops should be held for heads of departments or organisations to allow for a more top down approach. Dissemination of training information from senior staff within organisations needs to be more efficient and immediate.
- Future programmes of training should incorporate more time for role plays, completing the online learning during workshops, liaising and networking with existing colleagues (especially when designing a dissemination strategy) to cement the learning.
- If individuals from various organisations will be invited to participate the content of the examples provided should be more generic and not too school focused.
- Support for champions following the completion of workshops to ensure the momentum keeps going should be considered in the first few years.